



## **CALIFORNIA VETERANS BOARD**

### **Meeting Minutes #705**

**August 10, 2007**



**Chairman Vernon Chong**  
**Randal Bressette, Vice Chairman**  
**Tom Moran, Board Member**

**Jake I. Alarid, Board Member**  
**Alice Astafan, Board Member**  
**Colin Shadell, Board Member**

The California Veterans Board met at the Laguna Hills City Council Chamber, Laguna Hills, California at 9:00 AM

### **ROLL CALL**

Present: Vernon Chong, Chairman, Randal Bressette, Vice-Chairman, Member, Alice Astafan, Member, Thomas Moran, Member, Colin Shadell, Member, Jake Alarid, Member  
Chairman Chong presided

### **OPENING CEREMONIES**

- A) INVOCATION**
- B) PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

### **WELCOMING REMARKS/INTRODUCTIONS**

Chairman Chong welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending the meeting. The Chairman then introduced the members of the Board and provided background on each Board member. He then introduced Mr. Roger Brautigan, the Undersecretary of the California Department of Veterans Affairs.

Undersecretary Brautigan welcomed the group and introduced his staff, Chief Legal Counsel Rob Wilson, Deputy Secretary of Communications, J.P. Tremblay.

Chairman Chong introduced Assemblymember Chuck DeVore, who gave the opening remarks. He then introduced Mayor Melody Carruth, who welcomed the group to Laguna Hills.

### **MINUTES**

Executive Officer, Bonnie Kelly

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Approve the minutes of the previous meeting held June 15, 2007. Board member Bressette moved to approve the June 15, 2007 minutes with a correction to the name of Sheryl Schmidt. Board member Moran seconded.

Motion unanimously approved and carried.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Rusty Ruston  
Bill Manes  
David Salopek

## **OLD BUSINESS**

### **A) Internship for veterans of OEF and OIF**

Chairman Chong explained that Member Alarid supports creating a program where returning vets from Afghanistan or Iraq would participate in an internship as a State employee with the Department of Veterans Affairs. Since Civil Service does not allow restricting the internships to veterans, an alternative is to contract with Sacramento State University to provide the program. It would be necessary to find the appropriation of dollars to fund this program. As the Governor's Office currently has a similar program, the Department is working on a proposal to include the Vet internship. Undersecretary Brautigan explained that there will need to be a request for money from the General Fund. The Department will report to the Board on this issue at the October meeting.

### **B) GI Bill for OEF and OIF veterans (Jake Alarid)**

See next item.

### **C) Resolution to Support California Educational Grant (GI Bill) for California Iraq Veterans – Jake Alarid**

Member Alarid made a move to approve the resolution with the suggested changes. Member Bressette seconded the motion.

### **D) Governor's Tuition Assistance proposal in State budget (Jake Alarid)Proposed**

Mr. Tremblay advised that there was a proposal in the Governor's Budget for \$1.7 Million Dollars for National Guard fee waivers, but it was deleted during the budgetary process and there are attempts being made to get it restored.

### **E) Administrative procedure #7, Election of Chairman and Vice Chairman**

Member Astafan moved to approve the procedure for election of a Chairman and Vice-Chairman bi-annually. Member Bressette seconded the motion with the addition in the last line of "additional consecutive terms require the approval of the Board".

## **DEPARTMENT FORUM**

### **A. Department Update**

Undersecretary Brautigan updated the Board on the following:

- The Groundbreaking ceremonies for the 3 homes took place and preparations for construction are beginning.
- SB 630 passed and has been signed by the Governor which provides an additional \$30M in bond authority to finish Fresno and Redding. A Master Architect has been selected, and along with our staff, is negotiating with General Services. The contract needs to be signed by August 20 for us to stay on schedule.

- The Memory Care Center in Yountville had its grand opening last month. Dementia members will be admitted in October.
- The documentation went forward to the Federal Government requesting their participation in the Member Services Building in Yountville.
- Farm and Home Loan Program was provided with \$140M in qualified mortgage bonds and the money is being invested in home loans for new Vets. \$80M in loans has been provided and we are on a path to return and get an additional \$50M. Legislation was passed in Congress that removed the restriction of offering these loans to only first time home buyers.
- The lack of a budget is of major concern and the impact on our three Veterans Homes is being closely monitored. If a budget is not signed this month, the Department will have to ask the Governor for authorization to release emergency funds to us to cover critical items at the Homes.
- The Board received a briefing from Mr. Tremblay on HR 551. All of the California delegation has signed on to unanimously support this legislation and it is looking favorable for passage.

#### **B. Financial Policy for Homes**

Financial Qualification for entrance to homes. The Homes Committee will get some background information from Bill Parente to present to the Board.

#### **C. Significant Legal Matters**

Mr. Wilson requested this report be made in Closed Session.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

#### **A) Current status of legislation for national tuition assistance. HR 2702 and SB22, "Post 9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2007" (Alice Astafan)**

The Board members signed letters to all 53 of California' representatives and both senators asking for their support of these bills which will provide more and much improved benefits for the younger veterans who are returning to the civilian world after serving their country in uniform. Member Bressette made a motion to send the letters as written, and Jake Alarid seconded the motion.

#### **B) Recommendation of name for the new VA National Cemetery in Bakersfield. (Vern Chong)**

Chairman Chong reported to the Board that the recommendations for a name for the new VA Cemetery are: White Wolf, Pacific Crest Trail (or Pacific Crest), Kern Valley, Kern County, Bakersfield, Ft. Tejon, and Tehachapi. The National Secretary of the VA will make the final decision.

### **C) Reschedule of October Board meeting to coincide with Secretary's Conference**

Undersecretary Brautigan advised that due to the holiday, the Secretary's Conference was moved to October 19. Member Astafan moved to reschedule the Board meeting to coincide with the Secretary's Conference and be held on Thursday, October 18 at 2:00. Member Bressette seconded the motion.

### **D) Meeting Schedule (Randy)**

Member Bressette proposed creating a policy to establish that the Board hold a meeting yearly at each Veterans Home. Member Bressette moved to forward this item to the Policy and Procedures Committee for review and return in final form to the October meeting. Member Alarid seconded the motion.

### **LEGISLATIVE UPDATE**

- Member Bressette reported that SB 630, which the Board had supported was passed. This bill pertained to bond authority for additional funds to ensure that the future veterans' homes in Fresno and Redding projects stay on track.

### **XI. COMMENTS BY BOARD MEMBERS**

#### **CLOSED SESSION**

**The Board adjourned the open meeting and reconvened into closed session where Chief Counsel, Robert Wilson briefed the Board regarding an ongoing litigation.**

**The Board Adjourned the Closed Session and reconvened the Open Session.**

### **XII. ADJOURNMENT**

**MEETING ADJOURNED AT 12:10.**